

# **Phone Blocking Options**

How to prevent others  
from running up your  
telephone bill

**When it comes to your phone service, we know you have many questions.  
The State of Wisconsin's TeleWatch program will give you plain talk  
about your telephone service.**

**My kids ran up my telephone bill. How can I prevent this from happening again?**

There are many ways to keep a phone in your house for your own use and for safety purposes without allowing children or guests unlimited access to your credit with the telephone company. Several blocking options are available for different types of services. While most of the blocks are very good, none of them offer 100% guarantees. We'll talk about the options and pitfalls of the different types of blocks.

**Blocking Options Available  
From Your Local Telephone Company**

**Toll Restriction**

This feature blocks access to the long distance network. In other words, calls dialed with a "1" plus the area code will not go through. This service is free for low-income customers and free on the first activation for other customers. **Pitfalls:** dialing 1-800 will still go through. While these calls are typically free, it may be possible to dial a 1-800 number to a calling card access number and then to make long distance calls on a calling card. Make sure that calling cards issued through the LEC are cancelled, and watch your bill for calls carried by other companies. Also some of the marketing for 900 services suggests that callers dial an 800 number and then press further digits to accept charges, and these calls sometimes appear on bills as 900 calls. If this happens dispute the bill.

**Collect Call Blocks**

This feature blocks the ability to place a collect call to the line that is blocked. If collect calls are running up your bill, consider adding this block. **Pitfalls:** unfortunately, not all long distance providers honor the blocks. If you have collect calls blocked, and some unauthorized collect calls appear on your bill anyway, dispute the bill with the provider and with your local telephone company.

**Third Party Billed Call Blocks**

This feature blocks the ability to have calls placed when away from home billed back to your home number.

**900/976 Blocking**

This feature blocks calls beginning with the 900 or 976 prefix, which are numbers for which you have to pay a per-call or per-minute fee. This blocking service is free for low-income customers and free on the first activation for other customers. **Pitfalls:** none with the blocks. However, some of the marketing for 900 services suggests that callers dial an 800 number and then press further digits to accept charges, and these calls sometimes appear on bills as 900 calls. If this happens dispute the bill.

**Extended Community Call (ECC) Blocking**

ECC calls are local calls charged on a per minute basis. This feature blocks the ability to place calls to ECC prefixes, which are typically to communities within 15 miles. These ECC calls are dialed with seven digits, without first dialing 1, and are billed at from 3.4 to 8 cents *per minute*. This ECC blocking service is free for low-income customers and free on the first activation for other customers.

**Pay-Per-Use Feature Blocks**

Blocks may be available that prevent access to enhanced features, such as three-way calling or automatic call back, which are being offered in some places on a pay-per-use basis. Contact your local telephone company for more information.

## **Passwords**

Your local telephone company may offer an extra security arrangement for your service, so that changes to your telephone account, e.g. adding or removing features, may only be made if the caller knows a password. Contact your local telephone company for more information.

## **PIC Freeze Protection**

A freeze on your Primary Interexchange Carrier (PIC) designation means that long distance companies cannot change your long distance provider without your express consent. The freeze is designed to prevent slamming. **Pitfalls:** It will not prevent slamming by certain companies that resell service on other companies' long distance networks.

## **“Cramming” Protection**

“Cramming” is the practice of adding unauthorized, misleading, or deceptive charges to a customer’s local telephone bill. Some local telephone companies offer a “cramming block” to prevent these charges from being added. Contact your local telephone company for more information.

## **Blocking Services From Long Distance Providers**

Services will vary by provider, and are only effective for calls handled by that provider. Contact the individual companies for further information on the following options.

### **International Block**

Many long distance providers offer the blocking of outgoing international calls which are dialed with the 011 prefix.

### **Blocks to All Services**

You may be able to ask a long distance company to block access to its network for calls originating from your line, if you are concerned about children or guests establishing service, making unauthorized long distance calls or obtaining calling cards in your name from your home line.

## Who can help?

**The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin** is the state agency that oversees the telephone industry. Most local and in-state telephone billing and service complaints may be directed to the PSC. Call or write to:

P.O. Box 7854  
Madison, WI 53707-7854  
(800) 225-7729 (800-CAL-PSCW)  
TTY (608) 267-1479  
Fax (608) 266-3957  
E-Mail: [pscsecs@psc.state.wi.us](mailto:pscsecs@psc.state.wi.us)  
<http://psc.wi.gov>

**The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection** mediates and investigates telecommunications complaints, including those regarding mail and phone solicitations, deceptive and misleading marketing, and long distance rate changes. Call or write to:

P.O. Box 8911  
Madison, WI 53708-8911  
(800) 422-7128  
TTY (608) 224-5058  
Fax (608) 224-4939  
E-Mail: [datcph hotline@datcp.state.wi.us](mailto:datcph hotline@datcp.state.wi.us)  
<http://datcp.state.wi.us>

**The Wisconsin Department of Justice** enforces state law, including telecommunications. Write to them at:

123 West Washington Ave.  
P.O. Box 7857  
Madison, WI 53707-7857  
[www.doj.state.wi.us](http://www.doj.state.wi.us)

**The Federal Communications Commission** is the federal agency that oversees the telecommunications industry. Call or write to:

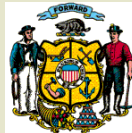
Consumer Protection Branch  
Common Carrier Bureau  
445 12th St., SW  
Washington, DC 20554  
Toll-free (888) 225-5322 (888-CALL FCC)  
Toll-free TTY  
(888) 835-5322 (888-TELL FCC)  
[www.fcc.gov](http://www.fcc.gov)

## Bilingual service / Servicio Bilingüe

The Public Service Commission (PSC) is also able to provide customer assistance in Spanish. When calling the PSC, please ask to speak to a Spanish speaking representative.

En la Comisión de Servicios Públicos del estado de Wisconsin (PSC) podemos asistirles en español. Cuando llame a la PSC, pida hablar con un representante de habla hispana.

**The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin does not discriminate on the basis of disability in the provision of programs, services, or employment. If you are speech hearing, or visually impaired and need assistance, call (608) 262-8524 or TTY (608) 267-1479. We will try to find another way to get the information to you in usable form.**



This brochure was produced jointly by the WI Public Service Commission, the WI Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, and the WI Department of Justice.